

Civil Air Patrol Oral History Interview

WNHC 19.83-24

JOHN LAWRENCE and JOSEPHINE GILBERTSON

11 July 1983



NATIONAL HISTORICAL COMMITTEE
Headquarters CAP

CIVIL AIR PATROL
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview

of

John Lawrence Gilbertson
Josephine Gilbertson

by

Capt. Hellenmerie Walker, CAP

DATE: 11 July 1983

Location: Portland, Oregon

FOREWORD

The following is the transcript of an oral history interview recorded on magnetic tape. Since only minor emendations have been made, the reader should consistently bear in mind that he is reading a transcript of the spoken rather than the written word. Additionally, no attempt to confirm the historical accuracy of the statements has been made. As a result, the transcript reflects the interviewee's personal recollections of a situation as he remembered it at the time of the interview.

Editorial notes and additions made by CAP historians are enclosed in brackets. If feasible, first names, ranks, or titles are also provided. Any additions, deletions and changes subsequently made to the transcript by the interviewee are not indicated. Researchers may wish to listen to the actual interview tape prior to citing the transcript.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That I, Larry & Josephine Gilbertson, have this day participated in an oral-magnetic-taped interview with _____, covering my best recollections of events and experiences which may be of historical significance to the Civil Air Patrol.

I understand that the tape(s) and the transcribed manuscript resulting therefrom will be accessioned into the Civil Air Patrol's Historial Holdings. In the best interest of the Civil Air Patrol, I do hereby voluntarily give, transfer, convey, and assign all right, title, and interest in the memoirs and remembrances contained in the aforementioned magnetic tapes and manuscript to the Civil Air Patrol, to have and to hold the same forever, hereby relinquishing for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs, and assigns all ownership, right, title, and interest therein to the donee expressly on the condition of strict observance of the following restrictions:

Josephine Gilbertson
J. Gilbertson DONOR

Dated 3-27-85

Accepted on behalf of the Civil Air Patrol by

Capt. J. Walker

Dated _____

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Larry Gilbertson left a job as aviation writer for the Oregon Journal to open the new CAP facility in Laredo, Texas in October, 1942. With the enthusiastic and creative help of many individuals including A. A. Whipple, Ed Franzwa, Dean Turner, Bill Lees, observation flights over the Rio Grande River were inaugurated and the Headquarters and flight line to support them were developed.

Life in Laredo was full of surprises, from the Mayor's party to the tarantulas. Josephine Gilbertson joined CAP with her husband and worked at the plotting board, keeping track of all flights. After two years in Texas, the Gilbertsons finished their CAP duty in San Francisco with the Fourth Air Force.

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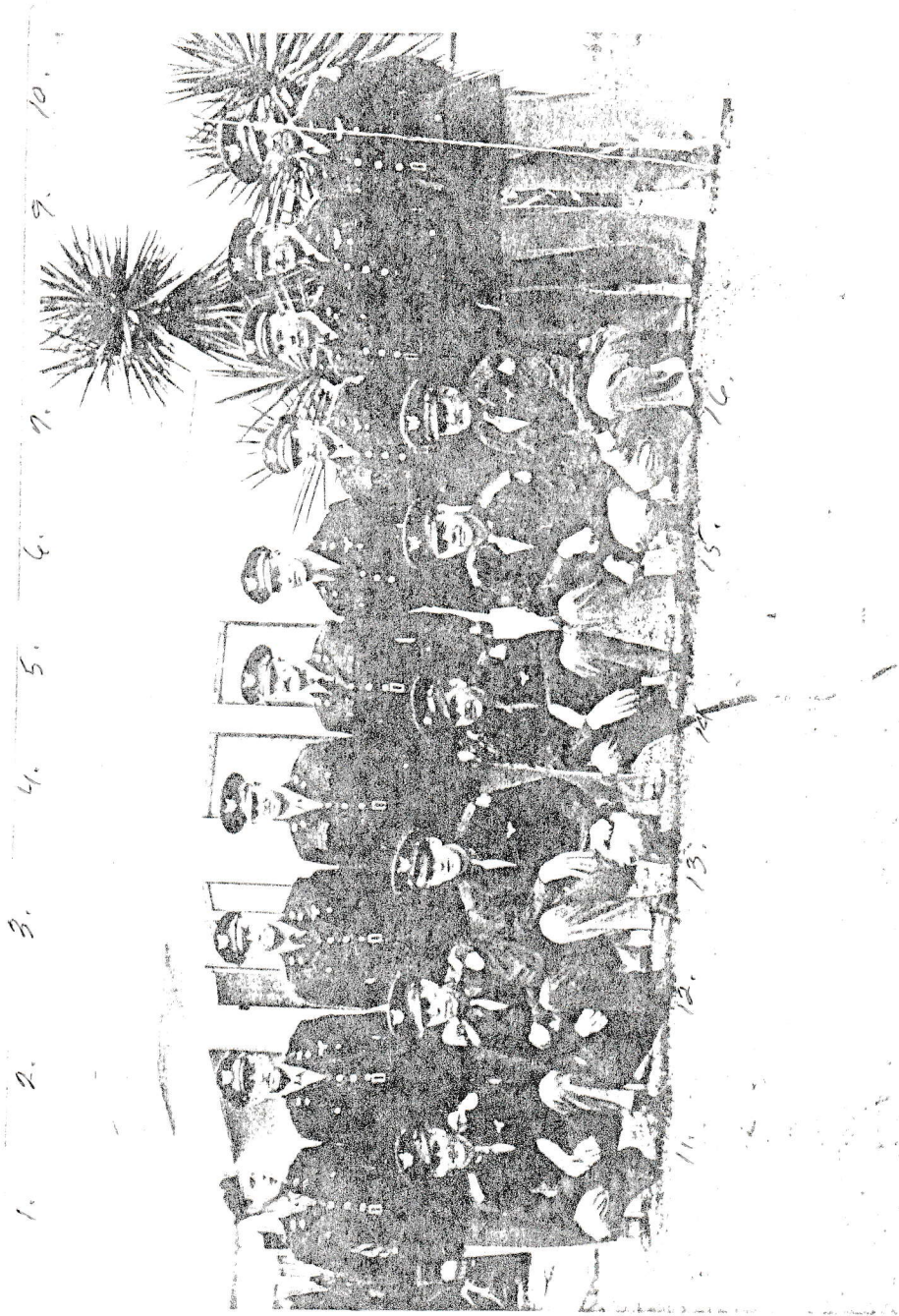
W: What kind of work were you into before you went into the Civil Air Patrol, Mr. Gilbertson?

LG: I was Aviation and Radio Editor of the Oregon Journal for quite a number of years. Then I became Marine Editor at the time Kaiser was launching those Victory Ships. I got acquainted with Col. Maughn and Harry Coffey because I needed a news source in the aviation field who could evaluate things. That was my first real liaison with Harry Coffey.

Then a time came when I tried to get in the Air Force and I flunked the physicals, so I went to Seattle and applied to the Navy. While I was in a hotel, there in Seattle, on leave from the Journal for a couple of days, the phone operator called and said, "Mr. Gilbertson, it's long distance." Well, nobody knew I was there, so the operator checked and said, "It's Coffey calling you from Brownsville, Texas!" "What are you doing up there?" he said. "I'm just trying to get in the Navy," I replied. "Well, don't sign anything," he said, "They want you for Intelligence Officer down here." "Where are you?" I asked. "I'm at Brownsville, but I'm thinking about Laredo," he said. Well, he'd asked me before if I'd go down there.

Mike Devaney, a mighty fine fellow, was a Wing Commander here and he got ahold of me and asked, "Why don't you go down there and find out where they want you, in the Army or Navy..." Then I told him they wanted me to be Intelligence Officer for CAP. I had had some exposure to the Army Air Corps due to my association with Col. Maughn at the Portland Air Base. They'd give it good coverage because their sons were going from Portland all over the world with the Air Corps. People were interested in what was happening to their kids, so we would give them pictures of the Portland Air Base and put in a good word since it was our first military installation in Oregon. It was during those days that I really got close to Harry Coffey and Bob Simmons of Civil Air Patrol. I was with the Journal from August 1923, as an office boy, until I returned from the war in 1945 and retired. I signed on with Coffey in his business.

W: You are a private pilot.



1. Bruce Scriverers
2. William E. Lees, III - Ontario, OR
3. Archie Gill - Spokane
4. Mabey - California
5. A. A. Whipple
6. Hugo Yerke
7. O. A. Donaldson (Pancho) - Portland OR
8. Dean? Turner
9. Ernest Morgan - Everett, WN
10. Ralph Perin

11.

12. Hinrichs

13.

14.

15.

16. Capt. Lathrop

LG: I was. I lost my license a long time ago.

W: Did you go to Brownsville first or to Laredo?

LG: No, Laredo. Jackson Moore, was brought into active duty in Portland and was sent to Laredo to open the base that Harry Coffey had arranged for us. A short time thereafter he spoke to Mike Devaney and Coffey and said, "Let's get some men down here." On this first trip, in October 1942, I went to Laredo with A. A. Whipple of Wenatchee, Washington. I took military leave from the Journal, climbed into his station wagon and went down to Laredo with him and Mr. Turner who was going down there to handle our mechanics.

Turner was prominent in boating here in Oregon, and he lived down on the coast. He was a very high class man. Whipple had a cleft palate and it was very difficult at first to understand him. Turner was noticing this, but in those days there were a lot of quiz programs on the air and we noticed that this fellow, though he couldn't speak too well, came out with the answers awfully fast. We began to see that, while he was not too great behind the wheel, we found out he was one smart hombre. When we got to Laredo, there were no Headquarters, of course, but Moore had taken a lease on a motel. He wanted to see us right away at the hotel. When we introduced him to A. A. Whipple, we kind of wondered what they were going to do with him. Well, Jackson took him right to Coffey and said, "He's the sharpest guy you ever saw. Don't you think we could use him?" And Coffey thought it was fine. On an early mission, a pilot named Fred Fredrickson (???) and Whipple went on patrol to get the lay of the Grande River. Our patrol was from Biggs(???) Air Base clear to the mouth of the Rio Grande. Our base station was in Laredo, Texas. So, these boys took off in Bill Lee, the Operation Officer's, Fairchild 24. We loved that plane, it had leather upholstery. Well, it got down to Brownsville all right but they'd come in late, so on the way back they cut straight across instead of taking the river, which is a meandering river. On the way back the darn engine quit and not only were they in strange country, but they were away from the river. Fredrickson was a good pilot and he lands this thing at an abandoned ranch out there in the end of God's half acre. They found a big sheet in the darned airplane and decided to put it up on the windmill because they knew people would be looking for them that night or in the morning, and of course the radio was out, too. Well, Whip puts the sheet under his arm and starts out, but first thing, a bunch of Javaline hogs start coming and he beats it back to the darn airplane in a hell of a hurry. They waited for the hogs to get out of the way and by then it was four or five o'clock, so Frederickson gets out and goes toward the ranch, but there's a bunch of wild cattle that hasn't seen a human for a long time, so he goes back. The third and last time something got to him and he had to climb half way up the windmill to get away from it, but he got the sheet up there

after three runs. He got back to the Fairchild and sat there feeling utterly abandoned in this strange country. They wondered what they were going to do. They figured we'd find them with the sheet up there, but knew darned well we'd patrol the river first. Whip was sitting there and said, "Way over there, there's some dust and it's coming closer and closer!" He jumped out and ran over there and it was some oil prospectors. You'd never expect anything to be out there, but thank God these two guys were there that afternoon. Whip said, "We have to get some information in to our Headquarters at Laredo. Can you help us? And, by the way, where are we?" They said, "Got a map?" Whip took out a map, and you know this geodetic map? I don't know what they are like now days, but they don't pinpoint anything really. They're very general in the desert country. Earlier Whipple had been watching out the window and looking at the map. He had put a check mark on the map when they landed. So he asked the oil guys, "Can you show us on the map where we are?" The answer was, "Yes, you're just exactly where that check mark is." Old Whip, he just dead reckoned, even in that strange country, right down to the spot. He had been a highway engineer and he recognized grades and things along the way that you or I wouldn't. He was great. We always had respect for him, but everyone listened closer to Whip after that. Donaldson will remember. It took four or five months to get the parts to fix the plane. You're going to clear this with Donaldson, he'll fill you in.

W: In Laredo...

LG: When Josephine and I walked into the manager's part of the motel - that was our quarters. We bought what we called a swamp refrigerator. It had a window and dripped water down over itself and it ran the air through it. Every night the boys would come in and they'd drink their cold rum and coke in front of it and then we'd go to dinner. We had our own mess, too.

W: You handled intelligence.

LG: That was my original assignment. This was the intelligence base.

W: What did that entail?

LG: We were down there under the operational control of the 56th Cavalry Brigade and our reason for being down there was to be the eyes of the Cavalry. We started operations on Laredo's Municipal Airport, if that was the name of it. We were under the Southern Land Frontier. There were sea frontiers and land frontiers and I don't know if the names were in general use. It was the Portland men who were on Liaison Patrol Number One. We had a wonderful patrol around the Gulf of Mexico. We just went down to the mouth of the

Rio Grande and back. It was the Brownsville people who took the sea patrol. They would patrol against submarines, as they did on the East Coast.

I don't know how many men ever got the East Coast duty. It was a real gamey deal because if you had to go in on them, sometimes your life expectancy was 30 seconds. But it was a little better down there on the Gulf Coast. All you had to watch out for there were sharks.

W: How long were you there at Laredo?

LG: I was at Laredo from October 1942 until I was relieved and sent to San Francisco, 11 April 1944. The paper is mixed up in this other junk here. Do you want that?

W: Oh, this is your discharge: 17 March '45 from San Francisco. Basically, weren't you supposed to be in 6 months? Wasn't that the original thought, six months of duty?

LG: Oh, I know one thing. Undoubtedly when they organized the bases, or flights, or whatever we call them, they couldn't get every relief for the term, so they asked people to serve six months. I imagine some people went in for six months, some of the California guys, but none of our guys.

W: They didn't go home for 18 to 24 months.

LG: No. Josie and I were gone from October 1942 until '54, wasn't it? I'll ask Jo. She's coming. These things kind of bounce around in my mind.

W: Do the Blue Duck...

LG: Just a minute. Here, you might look at that. (pictures?) That'll take you through the regular records. Now I'm just getting to Laredo, the very first day. When we got there Major Coffey says, "Larry, you and Jo come right away. The Mayor of the town, Major Jack O'Hearn is having a party out at his ranch and they very much want you people there." I says, "All right, I'll do that." But my stuff is on the road, you know, so I got a pair of pants and rolled them up like this, and Harry shortened them for me. I had this shirt they found in the motel, and it was in a hell of a shape, but we went out to this ranch to the barn - one hell of a barn. The floor of this barn was oak, highly polished. The District Attorney was tending bar. Everybody in town was there, but also all the military was there: the beginning of the Air Force which later took over there at the Laredo Air Field, and some people from the Cavalry to whom we were attached. So we really had a nice time. They were very cordial to us.

Harry Coffey and his wife, Holly Hill, had been out there before. She was his secretary, too, you know, and she made

all the flights with Harry, so it's she whom you'll wish to get some factual information from about the establishment of the Frontier.

We went out and built a Headquarters. We had an Army cookshack left by the outfit we relieved, an Army Air Corps Observation Squadron which had been serving the Cavalry before us. I think they had done the first forest mapping, and they went on doing their specialty of mapping, and we slipped in behind them just to do the observation work. So, we took over this cookshack and made it Headquarters and put in the plotting board so we could protect our airplanes and Navy planes. Then we had a little excitement when we found that the girls Chick Sales' (head) had black widow spiders in it...

W: Is that familiar? (picture)

LG: This one over here looks like Jack Moore's trailer.

W: Was this Laredo? The tent.

LG: This is different. This is where they repaired planes. That's out at the Municipal Airport. We landed on the apron of that thing, did not go to the damn runway.

W: Did you just do observation intelligence type work?

LG: We acted as the aerial eyes of the 56th Cavalry Brigade.

W: And when the pilots and observers would come back...

LG: They would write out the report, then I talked to them. If you've been in airplanes you know you don't go for details very much, specially after many hours in the air at 100 to 110 degrees and it gets kind of tiresome. It is hard trying to keep your interest in what you're supposed to do. So, I used to talk to them about seeing what they looked at. We cracked each other up that way. Well, a week after we started this gimmick in came two new pilots with a report. I said, "This license number, you sure you got it right?" "Yeah," they said, "we had to make two passes at it, Captain." So I shot the report over to the intelligence section, about a block from us, at 56th Cavalry Brigade and the G-2, who was a good friend of ours, called me right back and said we should be careful what we put in our reports. "It's foolish to put the licence numbers in," he said. "Just tell me if it's wrong," I said. "All right, just a minute...Well, it's our Border Patrol! That's pretty damn good," he says. So, you see, it pays. Those are the pleasant things that happened.

W: How about this picture?

LG: We're back in the motel now, and we're getting organized.

Jack Moore and I set up in this shed. It was a converted barracks and we zipped the sides and we screened all through. Operations was in there, and an assignment desk, and a desk for me, and the girls had a plotting board back there to keep track of their guys. We patrolled then off the Laredo Municipal Airport east to Brownsville and west to Del Rio, usually up and back. We had to stagger these flights and sometimes we asked them to stay at the end and come back in the morning to provide for those extra efficiency little things. I never was specific, never discussed their orders. Probably you noticed there hasn't been any publicity in this period at all. It was all confidential. Our reports were confidential to the Cavalry and were none of our business after that. It took me to El Paso once to school with their own Cavalry men.

W: How about...

LG: Oh, one more thing I need to tell you. Ours was not a spit and polish outfit. We went down there with a minimum number of enlisted men and we were there because the government didn't have any airplanes down there. That's why we were using civilian airplanes. We were in uniform, and were operating off an Army station, using their air space and their base. There were some things the regulations would allow us to do, and after they got to know us, other things came out way. Operating in this way was kind of awkward, and we needed to be closer together, so the Engineers built a short runway and we moved over to Ft. McIntosh and they gave us our clearance. Hip, hip, hurray.

W: Now, let's see...

LG: Ed Cranshaw. Gee, he's the handiest guy in the world. He was my assistant Intelligence Officer. With some good help, I'll be darned if he didn't put partitions in this converted barracks. We had an office for Bill Lees, for this is after Jackson left, and we had a hell of a Headquarters, thanks to Ed and the guys. We built it ourselves, you see. Of course the Army helped us, but we asked for very little.

We're back now and unloading our fuel (picture). The time has come now when something happened up at Charleston, South Carolina and Jackson R. Moore and Doll were moving from Laredo to Charleston. You've got that segment already. And then, who's going to be CO? Well, it naturally follows pretty much: the CO, then executive officer, then Operations, then supply. They appointed Bill Lees. He was their Operations officer, and that moved Archie Gill up to Operations. Bill was a great guy, everybody thought so. He was from Ontario, Oregon, and a loveable guy. I had some experience with him out at the Portland Air Base, you know, and oddly enough, it came about that I was appointed Executive Officer. Bill was CO and I was Executive Officer as well as Intelligence Officer. We had a new staff.

Let's go back. We were there for a month or so and Jack Moore and Doll found a nice place in Laredo to rent, not a house, but a beautiful room. They had us over for drinks that night and doggone, I never will forget! We walked in and he says, "Skinny, come here and look." He called me Skinny and nobody else ever did. He opens the kitchen window and reaches out like this and pulls in a line and says, "Look, if you have to go..." Oh, God, we Yankees are not used to the coffee can trick. There's always something! I loved it, though.

Let me see that picture again. When Jack Moore went to Charleston, then Bill Lees of Ontario, Oregon was appointed Base Commander of Laredo Frontier Liaison Base Number One. It was a successful command, I think, one of the fine, harmonious bases the CAP had in active duty. Ultimately, on Bill's resignation and return home, Frank Van Patten, also of Ontario, Oregon, came in from Brownsville. Then when Van Patten was called back to Oregon for two weeks for business purposes, I was transferred to assignment with the Headquarters of the Fourth Air Force in San Francisco.

W: Mr. Gilbertson, I'd like to ask you about some of these different names I have. Harry Hewitt.

LG: That's the one I cannot tell you about. He was killed on active duty down there and I was not on the base at the time. It was after I was transferred to San Francisco. As I understand it, they were on patrol and crashed into Mexico and anything I have to say is completely hearsay. The assumption was they were flying along the border, as we did every day, of the Laredo gunnery range, and they were shot in the air. This, of course, should have been investigated at the time, and maybe it was, but I had not heard anything. His widow is remarried and living in Oregon. I think her first name was Juanita. There was an unborn child at the time.

W: We'll see if some of the others might know.

LG: Donaldson might help you on that.

W: All right. How about Frank Myers.

LG: You might remember he came down from El Paso and helped us to establish the maintenance schedule at Lei Rio, the Western premise of our patrol.

W: The next one: Charles T. Haas.

LG: Charles T. Haas. When I first knew him it was before the war. He was an attorney for Southern Pacific Railroad in Portland. He went to Brownsville as Intelligence Officer. He had a home on the Isle of Pines, near Cuba, but that was 40 years ago.

W: The next one! Ralph Perin.

LC: Ralph Perin. I've given his phone number. He was a Eugene, Oregon, man and an excellent pilot. He helped me in intelligence frequently. He lives in Portland and you have his phone number.

W: All right, now how about George Brunner?

LC: I talked to George two days ago and he will be glad to help you on identification. His mind is a lot more active than mine and he'll help you with a lot of other things, too. He is a very fine pilot.

W: And then you have already told me about A. A. Whipple.

LC: He's a great one and I hope to see him someday, maybe.

W: Those are the names I have so far. Now you have given me more names which I will ask the next ones down the line.

LC: Then you need a couple or two more. Soon after we got to Texas there was a girl from central Oregon, Bend perhaps, named Ruth Perry. And Franzwa, he dealt with supplies and went into the Army. When we got to Laredo, Ed built and operated a mess for us with his left hand while he carried on his other duties with his right. He was a great operator and a real aggressive fellow. Be sure to get him in the record.

W: Where is he now?

LC: The last thing I heard of him he was well established in Eugene, Oregon, but he also was operating an irrigation project his father had started ahead of him. He was very successful with it and operated quite a bit in the Rio Grande valley.

Now, let's see, ask Brunner about Klass. Klass was a fireman from Eugene, I'm quite sure. One day, on taking off he had an engine failure. This is not an unheard of thing now days even though we have the best mechanics in the world. The engine quit on him and he had to land in Nuevo Laredo, over on the Mexican side. Where do you suppose he landed? Right where the girls were waiting for him - about 15, or 20 of the girls who make it a practice of treating people. It'll take a long time for him to forget that one.

We weren't too accustomed to bugs and at Ft. McIntosh the Engineer laid an apron for us to park our airplanes on rather than in the dust. Well, that was all right until one night there was quite a tropical storm and rain. When I got there in the morning, at the crack of dawn, where's the sentry? I looked around and here he was in an airplane. He looked at me and called out, "Captain, come here. I was patrolling

this at two o'clock this morning when the storm hit. I got my flashlight on to loosen up the flight lines and saw these frogs jumping, you know. I put my flashlight down to tie the knot and, my God, they're not frogs at all, they're tarantulas. They apparently live under the ground with a trap door on top and they'd been flooded out of the place and here on this apron they could jump and keep from drowning. But they were all jumping, a couple hundred of them." So he got right back into the airplane.

W: I don't blame him.

LG: When I came over he got out and said, "I guess they're gone now." And he was a native down there! Another time there were scorpions, but they weren't bad. I am told that the scorpions are bad over in Chihuahua, Mexico, but in Laredo they just amounted to a few bee stings. At the beginning when we went into the Municipal Airport, we took over a place that had screened windows. I mean the screens in the windows. You put down these flaps on the outside and you fasten them down in lieu of closing the windows, see. When you got there in the morning you lifted them out and propped them up and left them up, but pretty soon you got too smart to do it without gloves or something on because the tarantulas or the scorpions liked to get in underneath, so, you're real careful. Then the next thing we knew, these darn New York kid-mechanics of ours were pitching the tarantulas versus the scorpions. We had one hell of a time with those fellows, so that was the end of that. Now who've we got?

W: Let me see...

LG: Ed Franzwa, Ruth Perry, Bud Thompson, Bill Blackaby, A. A. Whipple I've told you about. Ed Franzwa was one of the greats. He did a good job. I used him not to fly, but I used to get him to type up intelligence reports and things like that. In talking to George Bruner, he mentioned Oosterveer.

W: Here is a letter dated 4 October 1944 ordering you to report to the Fourth Air Force in San Francisco for duty as Liaison Officer between them and CAF pertaining to missing aircraft search and Tow Target and Tracking Operations. We will put it in your historical file.

Now we've got you out of Laredo and on duty in San Francisco. You were saying there were a variety of places where you had target towing and anti-aircraft training things:

LG: We had a flight in San Diego, another in Glendale, California.

W: And the Glendale one had mostly Florida people and the

San Jose had mostly Corpus Christi people. Then there was Gray McChord...

LG: Yeah, Gray Field-McChord had Jim Rosenbaum of Portland and a few scattered from here and there. We ran an occasional flight in those days from San Jose to Sacramento to pick up mail for the fellows who were stuck way up in Tonopah, Nevada. They got very poor mail service so we made this special flight, which was later discontinued. The plane would go up over the hill and fly down into Tonopah. They were surely welcome every two or three days.

W: Now this is something I had not heard before.

LG: After a while, all of a sudden, here came orders we were to conduct only missions as per orders on tow target and tracking.

Subsequently we received strict orders to adhere only to tow target and tracking. Then, I got a call one day from Jim Rosenbaum at McChord telling me, "Larry, I got a problem." I say, "Well, talk about it." He says, "Well, it's confidential." I say, "We're on protected lines - Fourth Air Force." Jim says, "The Japanese balloons are coming over." Did you know about this?

W: I have since found out. We need to know more.

LG: He said the FDI and Army Intelligence wants us to follow them if we can, but Gen. Arnold's directive, passed down, was that we can't do anything but target towing and tracking. What are we going to do? Our equipment is the only equipment available up here to fly that slow. So, what do I do?? You don't countermand Gen. Arnold's orders. But, it's something that should be done, if we can do it and want to do it. That's the story. I couldn't ask National Headquarters because they had moved down to some civilian location in New York someplace and I couldn't verb this over open wires, so I was having a heck of a time trying to decide. So I talked to Col. Harry Dlee and told him I had a problem, and he said, "Well, maybe an engine check or two." And I said, "Thanks a lot." So, we had a few crews and engines that needed flight checks. But we didn't do too much outside of regulations. In the CAF, from the lowest Private to the highest rank were all people who, I thought, did a whale of a good job.

W: What can you tell me about the actual target towing? What I'm seeing is one of the little planes with the target being towed behind and the fellows up at Boardman shooting at it.

LG: Well, I'm not an expert at it. I never was in a tow target ship and I don't think I ever inspected one. They'd take the larger ships, the Wacos and likes of that, and put a

R E S T R I C T E D

**NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
CIVIL AIR PATROL
300 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK 18, NEW YORK**

SPECIAL ORDERS NO. 343

9 DECEMBER 1943

2.4 Authority AAF Regulation No. 20-18, "Organization - Civil Air Patrol", 25 May 1943, effective 2400 CWT, 11 December 1943, JOHN L. GILBERTSON (9-2-15), Captain, CAP, is hereby relieved from appointment as Acting Commanding Officer of CAP Southern Liaison Patrol No. 1 and of active duty assignment with said unit; is promoted to the rank of Major, CAP; and is assigned to duty at Headquarters, Fourth Air Force, 180 New Montgomery Street, San Francisco, California, at a per diem of \$10.00 per day, as Liaison Officer between that Headquarters and CAP Tow Target and Tracking Units on duty for the Fourth Air Force in support of antiaircraft gunnery training of the Western Defense Command.

On or about 11 December 1943, Major Gilbertson will proceed via CAP airplane from Laredo, Texas to El Paso, Texas, from which point he will proceed via commercial airline to San Francisco, California, where he will report for duty to Headquarters Fourth Air Force.

By direction of National Commander JOHNSON:

HARRY M. BLAKE
Colonel, Air Corps
Operations Officer
Civil Air Patrol

OFFICIALS:


HOWARD S. STERNE
Major, Air Corps
Asst. Operations Officer
Civil Air Patrol

DIST:

2-Individual	2-Unit File
1-Principal	1-Wing Hq.
1-Fiscal	1-Sq. Hq.
2-Operations	2-Coordinating Officer

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS
32d AAF Base Unit
(Civil Air Patrol)

~~HEADQUARTERS CIVIL AIR PATROL~~

800 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y.

2103

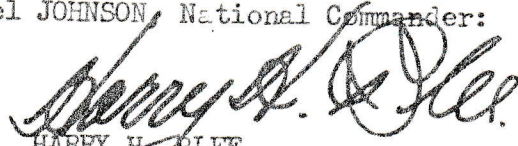
11 October 1944
HHB:hls

Subject: Letter of Instructions - CAP Liaison Officer, Hq. Fourth Air Force

To: Major J. L. Gilbertson, CAP Liaison Officer
Headquarters Fourth Air Force
180 New Montgomery Street
San Francisco 6, California

1. Pursuant to conference of 4 October 1944 between this office and Headquarters Fourth Air Force, and effective this date, arrangements have been made whereby, in addition to your assignment as CAP Liaison Officer to Fourth Air Force on matters pertaining to tow target and tracking operations, you will also serve as Liaison Officer between this Headquarters and Headquarters Fourth Air Force on matters pertaining to CAP Missing-Aircraft Search Service and other CAP operations.

By direction of Colonel JOHNSON, National Commander:


HARRY H. BLEE
Colonel, Air Corps
Operations & Training Officer

2 Incls

Incl 1 - cy ltr 10/11 to CG 4AF
Incl 2 - cy ltr 10/11 to W.C. of
Cal. Nev. Ore. Wash.

cc:

CG 4 AF
C.O. Cal. Wing
C.O. Nev. Wing
C.O. Ore. Wing
C.O. Wash. Wing

winch in them. They did lose a pilot, didn't they, at Palmdale. He was from some other base, he was out of the Glendale base.

W: Up at Boardman, you know, up by Pendleton...

LG: That's the Air Force.

W: They did target towing up there.

LG: Well I don't think the CAP ever went that far out.

W: Well, in the Washington history that Bill Toth wrote, he mentioned the target towing out of Pendleton when we were doing it here.

LG: I didn't know about it and I don't think it was part of our deal, but it may be that the Washington men may have taken some assignments somewhere. I'll tell you who you can ask: Mert Rosenbaum.

W: Is that the wife of Jim Rosenbaum?

LG: Yes. She lives on Weidler Street in Portland. I've got a story to tell you about Mert. Col. Blee came out to inspect bases and stopped at McChord. Here was Mert in Headquarters at the flight charts. Col. Blee turns to Mert and said, "I'd like to send a teletype to Washington." Well, Mert's a handy gal, but she's not just a secretary. Here's the Operations Officer, you know, thinking she can punch on the teletype. Well she was nervous, so I sparked it. I said, "I'll take that for you, Colonel, you want that to go to Washington? Mert will you type that list for me and in the meantime would you get..." She never forgot that!

W: What is the Missing Aircraft Search Service?

LG: Shortly after the General had my orders broadened - you saw the directive - to include missing aircraft search, we couldn't do as much on this coast, as I remember. West of the mountains you couldn't fly a civilian airplane, but Reno was out of that and those guys had a heck of a good group going. Once or twice the Air Force went up to pick up an airplane and Reno squadron was already bringing the bodies out. They had jeeps and everything.

W: They still do.

LG: Do they? They're a great people. I got orders to go up there to attend these meetings now and then.

W: It's Josephine, isn't it? Josephine Gilbertson.

JG: Right.

W: You were married at the time you went to Laredo?

JG: Yes.

W: What were you doing prior to your Civil Air Patrol time?

JG: Living in Portland, keeping house.

W: Then you joined CAP at the same time that Mr. Gilbertson did and went with him to Laredo? And were you issued orders along with his?

JG: Right. Yes.

W: Okay. What did you do there?

JG: I was assigned as plotting board operator. You had a map in front of you and the planes call in their location, their plane number. I put a little pin where they were. We kept track of the flight from beginning to end by radio. That way we could always contact them.

W: How many other women were there with you there at Laredo?

JG: Well, I was the only plotting board operator. There were clerk typists like Ruth Perry and Mert Rosenbaum and Leila Ball and Vivian somebody.

W: And you lived...

JG: We lived in Laredo. Jack Moore, who was our Commanding Officer, went down ahead and he leased a whole motor court for the duration of six months. As CO, he and Doll were going to have the manager's apartment, but by the time we got there, Jack had found a house off the base and we fell heir to the manager's quarters. That was real nice. Everybody else that came down had a motel, which was nice too.

W: Well, it beats tents.

JG: Yeah, or trying to find someplace to stay. He had it all under control there. Larry, where did we eat in the first place?

LG: We ate in restaurants.

JG: At first we were on our own for food and then Jack, through the man who owned this motel, built another double unit. Jack made a mess hall for us - a kitchen and a dining room - out of it and we had our food right on our grounds.

W: At this time, wasn't the Civil Air Patrol personnel paid by per diem, not a salary?

JG: Per diem was the money you made.

W: As opposed to now, we are not paid, in fact we pay. When we are on an actual search, we are reimbursed for our gas and oil and long distance telephone, and that's it.

JG: Right, it's volunteer.

W: Yes, but, at that time there was supposed to have been instigated in Congress an insurance for Civil Air Patrol active duty people and it never was passed that I could find out. So, any accidents and any type of hospitalization or doctors care that any of you needed you had to pay for. Right?

JG: That's right, except on the Base there at Ft. McIntosh there was a Col. Kinney. That didn't cost us anything.

LG: Dear, dear Col. Kinney. He was a good surgeon and was good to us all. God bless him. Do you remember, there was the bad incident when Bill Lees and I got back and found the whole base sick, running at both ends?

JG: Food poisoning.

LG: We had to step in and get civilian doctors for everybody. Our outfit, the 50th Cavalry, said, "What are you doing over there? Get over here to Ft. McIntosh." And then Major Kinnney started inspections and we had no more of that and it was awfully good they started.

JG: All right. But we didn't put anything out of our pocket, Larry. I had that awful ache in my gut and they treated me for months. Didn't cost a thing.

W: When you left Laredo were you assigned with Mr. Gilbertson, when you went to San Francisco?

JG: No, my term of duty was over then, but I went to San Francisco to be with Larry.

W: Did you go to McChord?

LG: No.

W: You had done your six months, only it was strung out to 14 months.

JG: Right.

LG: I never lived at McChord. I lived in San Francisco till the end. When we'd go to these low target outfits, like San Pedro, San Diego, Glendale, San Jose, they always had a

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY AIR FORCES
WASHINGTON

12 January 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation - CAP Tow Target and Tracking Operations

TO: Commanding Officers, CAP Tow Target Units No. 7 and No. 22

1. During the period since 1 December 1942, Civil Air Patrol has been performing tow target and tracking operations for the Army Air Forces. These operations have expanded from the tracking missions performed by two small detachments located on the East Coast to a tow target and tracking service extending from Key West, Florida, to Portland, Maine, in the Eastern Defense Area and from San Diego, California, to Tacoma, Washington, in the Western Defense Area. This assignment will be completed on 28 February 1945, whereupon the work will be taken over by personnel and equipment which the Army Air Forces will then have available for this purpose.

2. Throughout this period, these operations have been handled in a manner and with a spirit of service deserving of the highest praise and commendation. It gives me great pleasure to express my deep appreciation to you and to all CAP officers and members who have engaged in this undertaking.

By command of General ARNOLD:



WILLIAM W. WELSH
Brigadier General, U. S. Army
Assistant Chief of Air Staff, Training

Oregon Journal
Aug 24, 1947



CAP OFFICERS cited by the war department for meritorious service are Larry Gilbertson (left), former aviation editor of The Journal, and Jack R. Moore, Western Skyways president

Four Oregon Men Honored

Of the 29 decorations authorized by the war department for exceptional service in the Civil Air Patrol, four have been awarded to Oregon men. Two are from Portland.

Jack R. Moore, president of Western Skyways, and Larry Gilbertson, former aviation editor of The Journal, are the local recipients of the medals. Awards have been made also to William E. Lees Jr., Ontario, and posthumously to Frank Van Petten, Ontario, who died in a plane crash in Idaho two years ago.

While in active CAP service

during the war the four men held ranks of major and were stationed in Texas. In describing their achievements, the war department citation lauds their "marked courage in the face of danger while performing regular wartime flying missions."

The medals were awarded in a ceremony at McChord field by

Col. Robert Scott, author of "God Is My Co-Pilot."

place nearby for us to stay.

W: The courier service, was that basically Washington and Nevada?

LG: I know nothing about it except one thing. We went on a flight every now and then, but that was an extra run.

W: A mercy flight type thing?

LG: No, after Gen. Arnold's directive we never went back to Tonopah. That would have been a direct violation of orders. We did tow target and tracking.

W: And you had your engine checks.

LG: No actually, that wasn't a direct violation, it was an emergency, and until I could get clearance something had to be done. Later we put it in legitimately.

W: Do you know of any Oregonians that were involved with the Japanese sub that was found on the Washington coast?

LG: All I know is that a sub fired a shell into a fort at the mouth of the Columbia.

W: No, this was another one that the Civil Air Patrol found just below the point of Washington.

LG: No, I never heard of that one.

W: What are some of the ladies that you remember working with? You mentioned Ruth Perry, Myrtle Rosenbaum and who else? What did Myrtle Rosenbaum do?

JG: She was a clerk typist and Jim was a flyer.

W: Were any of the women pilots?

JG: We had one who was a pilot, and not a clerk typist. Where did she come from, Larry?

LG: I think she came down from Oregon Wing. She had one leg and a cocker spaniel pup.

W: A wooden leg and a cocker spaniel. Was that Josephine Cochrane?

LG: I don't remember her name.

W: I'll tell you what. I think we'll close now. I'd like to thank both of you very, very much for telling us of your part in CAP history.